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Inhaler.

An inhaler device comprising:
(i) a breath-actuated inhaler comprising a medication reservoir mounted within a housing which comprises a mouthpiece and breath-actuation means which prevents dispensing from the reservoir until a patient inhales through the mouthpiece, and
(ii) a protective casing surrounding the breath-actuated inhaler, the casing comprising a body portion and a movable cover which may be displaced to allow a patient access to the mouthpiece to use the breath-actuated inhaler whilst it is within the casing, the breath-actuated inhaler being removable from the protective casing and operable outside the casing.

John Gray Clarks

EP 0 414 536 A2

EP 0 414 536 A2

EP 0 414 536 A2

ment and equipped with a metering valve. However, the inhaler device of the invention may comprise a dry powder dispensing device in which the medication is entrained in the air stream established by the patient's respiratory effort. Examples of such devices are disclosed in our corresponding British Patent Application No. 8308191.7.

Reliable breath-actuated mechanisms for use in the inhaler are known and are described, for example, in European Patent No. 147028. The breath-actuated mechanism requires a priming or cocking force which causes the aerosol container relative to the valve stem for dispensing when the breath-actuated mechanism has been actuated. In one arrangement of the invention the priming force may be provided by a cocking lever mounted through the protective casing or may be provided by a cover arrangement or when the cover is displaced e.g. by a sliding, lever, geared or cam action or a combination thereof. Alternatively, access to a cocking lever may be gained when the cover is displaced. The priming force may be applied directly to the aerosol container or to the valve e.g. via a nozzle block assembly. The priming force is preferably applied by the cover which may be pivotally mounted to displace upwardly or downwardly to provide access to the mouthpiece. Generally the priming force applied by the cocking lever, cover etc., results in compression of a spring which causes the aerosol container relative to the valve when the breath-actuated mechanism is engaged. When the inhaler is removed from the casing the priming force may be applied manually by squeezing the aerosol container and housing between thumb and finger in a similar manner to a conventional pressurized-inhaler.

Alternatively, the inhaler may access to use a cocking lever to apply the priming force when the inhaler is removed from the casing. When the inhaler is within the casing the cocking lever may be actuated for use when the cover is displaced or may interact with the cover to pivot the inhaler during displacement of the cover.

The inhaler is preferably capable of accommodating aerosol vials of different lengths to avoid the necessity of producing completely different devices for each size of vial. Different lengths may be accommodated by having the body portion of the casing in two or more parts, one part being in the form of a sleeve or strand which envelopes the base and at least part of the body of the aerosol vial. A series of such sleeves may be fabricated to correspond to different lengths of aerosol vials. Alternatively, the body portion of the casing may have an aperture through which the aerosol vial extends thereby avoiding the need for producing a range of different size components. The inhaler preferably incorporates means to

provide an indication of the number of doses dispensed either remaining in the aerosol container. The indication is preferably visual and the housing of the inhaler and optionally the protective casing may have a transparent window or aperture for viewing.

The invention will now be described with reference to the accompanying drawings in which:

Figure 1 represents a vertical cross-section through a breath-actuated inhaler suitable for use in the invention.

Figure 2 represents a vertical cross-section through the breath-actuated inhaler of Figure 1 during operation.

Figure 3 represents a vertical cross-section through the breath-actuated inhaler of Figure 1 in the press-and-breathe mode.

Figure 4 represents a vertical cross-section through an inhaler device in accordance with the invention which comprises the breath-actuated inhaler of Figure 1 within a protective casing.

Figure 5 represents a vertical cross-section through the inhaler device of Figure 4 showing the cover displaced.

Figures 6a and 6b represent a perspective view and a cross-section through an alternative inhaler device in accordance with the invention. Figures 7a and 7b represent a perspective view and vertical cross-section through a further inhaler device in accordance with the invention. Figures 8a and 8b represent a vertical cross-section through the upper portion of a further inhaler device in accordance with the invention.

Figures 9a and 9b represent a vertical cross-section through an upper portion of a further inhaler device in accordance with the invention.

Figures 10a and 10b represent a vertical cross-section through an upper portion of a further inhaler device in accordance with the invention.

Referring to Figures 1 to 5, the breath-actuated inhaler comprises a housing (2) incorporating a mouthpiece (4) and containing an aerosol vial (3). The aerosol vial (3) may be of any suitable size and has a covering valve (1a) shown comprising a hollow valve stem (5). The valve stem (5) is held within a nozzle block (1b) which has a passage (1c) in communication with the mouthpiece (4). Discharge of the metering valve is effected by relative movement between the valve stem (5) and the aerosol vial (3).

The breath-actuation mechanism comprises a valve (14) which is pivotally mounted within the mouthpiece (4), a roller element (13) which supports a catch (11) pivotally connected to the roller

The invention relates to inhaler actuable dispensers for use with inhalers such as dry powder dispensers and aerosol container assemblies which contain medicaments for inhalation therapy, are pressurized with liquid propellants, and include a metering valve through which a series of metered medicament doses can be dispensed. In particular the invention relates to inhaler actuable dispensers which are removably received within an outer casing.

Inhaler actuable dispensers for use with aerosol container assemblies of the type described above are known, their general purpose being to allow proper coordination of the dispensing of a dose of medicament with the inhalation of the patient thereby allowing the maximum proportion of the dose of medicament to be drawn into the patient's bronchial passages. Examples of such dispensers are described in British Patent Specifications Nos. 1,268,594, 1,325,378, 1,380,182 and 1,291,118 and United States Patent Nos. 3,438,844, 3,643,843, 3,458,648, 3,583,070, 3,528,294, 3,614,287, 3,605,730, 3,732,684, 3,638,846, 3,789,843 and 3,187,748 and German Patent No. 3,040,941.

European Patent No. 147028 discloses an inhaler actuable dispenser for use with an aerosol container in which a latch mechanism releasing valve is pivotally mounted in an air passage between an aerosol outlet valve and a mouthpiece, which latch mechanism cannot be released if force to actuate the dispenser is not applied before a patient inhales.

The dispenser generally comprises a housing having a mouthpiece and an air passage therethrough terminating at the mouthpiece, the housing being adapted to receive an aerosol container having a support block with a nozzle adapted to receive the spray of the valve of the aerosol container and a through orifice communicating between the nozzle and the air passage, and latch means having parts movable between an engaged position in which movement of the container and the support block toward each other upon the application of a force to bias the container and the support block toward each other is prevented and a release position in which movement of the container and the support block toward each other in response to said force is permitted causing the stem to move to its inner discharge position, the latch means comprising a valve mounted on the housing in the air passage between the orifice and the mouthpiece for movement toward the mouthpiece under the influence of inhalation through the mouthpiece to release the latch means in which the valve

moves toward the mouthpiece from a blocking to a non-blocking position with respect to the passage-way in response to inhalation at the mouthpiece and release the latch means only during the application of said force to bias the container and support block toward each other.

This inhaler device has been received favourably by patients and doctors alike not only because of the handling coordination problems but it does so at a very low triggering flow-rate (approximately 30 litres/minute) essentially silently, and with a very compact design barely larger than a standard inhaler.

It is an object of the present invention to provide an inhaler actuable dispenser within an outer casing.

Therefore according to the present invention there is provided:

(i) a breath-actuated inhaler comprising a medication reservoir mounted within a housing which comprises a mouthpiece and breath-actuation means which prevents dispensing from the reservoir until a patient inhales through the mouthpiece, and

(ii) a protective casing surrounding the breath-actuated inhaler, the casing comprising a body portion and a movable cover which may be displaced to allow a patient access to the mouthpiece to use the breath-actuated inhaler whilst it is within the casing, the breath-actuated inhaler being removable from the protective casing and operable outside the casing.

The arrangement of a removable breath-actuated inhaler within a protective casing has several advantages. The casing surrounds and preferably completely envelopes the inhaler preventing ingress of dust, water and other foreign bodies allowing the inhaler device to be readily carried in a pocket, rucksack etc. The inhaler may be used without removing it from the casing by displacing the cover to allow patient access to the mouthpiece. The casing also protects the inhaler, particularly the breath-actuated mechanism, from direct damage and if the casing is damaged the inhaler will probably still function from within the casing. However, if the casing is subjected to severe damage the inhaler may be removed and used in its breath-actuated mode outside the casing. In a preferred embodiment the breath-actuated inhaler comprises means to disable the breath-actuated mechanism thereby allowing the inhaler to be used in a simple press-and-breathe mode which allows fast filling.

The inhaler preferably comprises an aerosol vial containing a solution of propellant and medicament

in (11). When the breath-actuated mechanism is in its blocking position as shown in Figure 1 and a cocking force is applied in the direction of the arrow A, movement of the aerosol vial (3) relative to the valve stem (5) is prevented. Such movement is allowed by the valve stem (5) being pivotally prevented from pivotal movement by the catch (11) engaging the curved surface (23) of the valve (14). Thus, when the inhaler is in its breath-actuated mode it is not possible to dispense from the aerosol vial before inhalation through the mouthpiece (4).

When a patient inhales through the mouthpiece as shown in Figure 2, inhalation causes pivotal movement of the valve. The curved surface (23) of the valve (14) and the curved surface (17) of the catch (11) effectively act as co-operating roller surfaces. Pivotal movement of the valve causes the curved surface (23) to rotate in one direction resulting in curved surface (17) of the catch rotating in the opposite direction. This displacement of the catch moves from a blocking to an unblocking position allowing pivotal movement of the aerosol vial (3) which in turn allows movement of the vial (3) relative to the valve stem (5) under the influence of the cocking pressure causing the valve to flow.

The inhaler also comprises a switch (22) which may connect the inhaler between a breath-actuated mode and a press-and-breathe mode as may be required for fast filling. The switch (22) is pivotally mounted within the housing (2) and comprises a finger (24) which is capable of engaging the catch (11). When the switch (22) is in the breath-actuated mode as shown in Figure 1 and there is no engagement between the finger (24) and the catch (11). However, when the switch (22) is pivoted to the press-and-breathe mode as shown in Figure 3, the finger (24) engages the catch (11), pivoting the catch (11) away from the valve (14) to its unblocking position thereby allowing flow movement of the aerosol vial (3) relative to the valve stem (5). In the press-and-breathe mode the valve may be fixed at any flow. During use the patient will be required to co-ordinate the cocking force and breathing in order to attain an effective dose. The valve (14) will simply shut to the root of the mouthpiece during breathing.

The breath-actuated inhaler additionally comprises means to provide an indication of the number of doses dispensed and/or an indication of the amount of doses remaining. The indicator means comprises a ring (25) mounted for rotation about the aerosol vial, the ring having a plurality of circumferential teeth (26) which co-operate with a plurality of lines (27) mounted on the housing. During the reciprocating motion of the aerosol vial stem the valve is operated one or more of the lines

(28) about a cam surface on one or more of the teeth (26) causing rotation of the ring (25) by a small increment. Suitable indication markings are present on the side of the ring (25) which may be viewed through a transparent window (29) in the housing to provide the patient with an indication of the contents remaining. Examples of such means for providing a curved surface (17) engaging the curved surface (23) of the valve (14). Thus, when the inhaler is in its breath-actuated mode it is not possible to dispense from the aerosol vial before inhalation through the mouthpiece (4).

Figures 4 and 5 of the accompanying drawings illustrate the breath-actuated inhaler of Figure 1 in a protective casing generally shown at (34). The casing comprises a body portion (35) and a movable cover (36). The protective casing completely envelopes the inhaler preventing ingress of dust and other contaminants and provides robust protection against accidental damage should the inhaler device be dropped etc.

In the embodiment shown in Figure 4 and 5 the movable cover (36) is pivoted about pivot point (43) and has a forward protruding extension (39) which when closed fits the gap between pivot (43) and the casing. As the cover is pivoted, this extension (39) acts as a cam (42) on the bar of the inhaler and fits it up against spring (46). After 90° of movement finger (44) is lifted above first stop (45) on projection (40) on the protective cover and is retained on second stop, where it remains during remainder of cover movement. On closing, the cover or discharge flange (44) from case (45) and allows it to return to original position. Thus, a patient may simply open the cover of the casing and inhale through the mouthpiece to receive a dose of medication.

The breath-actuated inhaler is retained within the protective cover by a flange (44) on the housing engaging projection (40) on the interior of the protective cover. The inhaler may simply be removed by pivoting the inhaler upwards against the cocking spring (45) until the flange (44) and projection (40) disengage and then the inhaler may be readily pulled from the protective casing.

The breath-actuated inhaler may be inserted within the protective cover by fully opening the cover, pivoting the top of the inhaler up against the cocking spring and lowering the base until the flange (44) engages the projection (40). When the cover is closed the breath-actuated inhaler will automatically be converted to the breath-actuated mode, even if it is in the press-and-breathe mode, by flange (25) on the cover pushing against (22) to the breath-actuated position.

It will be readily appreciated that the protective casing may be constructed in a number of different configurations and it is not necessary for the opening of the cover to automatically apply a cocking

force to the inhaler. The arrangement of Figure 6a and 6b comprises a body portion (24) and a cover (25) which is pivotally mounted about pivot points (26). Opening of the cover (25) does not apply a cocking force to the breath-actuated inhaler. Cocking lever (23) is provided at the top of the protective cover and is constructed and arranged such that upon pivoting the cocking lever (23) downward pressure is applied to the aerosol vial of the breath-actuated inhaler (Figure 6b).

Figures 7a and 7b illustrate an alternative form of protective casing comprising a body portion (22) and a movable cover (23) which is pivoted from a point at the top of the body portion and provides a cocking force to the inhaler as the cover (23) is opened.

Figures 8a and 8b of the accompanying drawings illustrate a breath-actuated inhaler in accordance with the invention in which the protective casing (24) may be modified to accommodate aerosol vials of different length. The body portion (23) of the casing has an aperture (25) through which a shroud (22) extends which accommodates the aerosol vial (not shown). A series of struts (22) may be fabricated having different lengths in order to accommodate various sizes of aerosol vial.

Whilst a cocking spring may be positioned within the top of the shroud (22), in a similar manner to the cocking spring (14) shown in Figure 4, to store and retain the cocking force applied when the cover (23) is opened (as described with reference to Figure 4) a cocking spring external of the shroud (22) may be employed. The shroud (22) is provided with a flange (24) and cocking spring (25) is positioned around the shroud (22) extending between the flange (24) and a stop or the top of the protective casing (23). When the cover (23) is opened, the breath-actuated inhaler, together with the shroud (22) is lifted (Figure 8b) compressing cocking spring (25). When the patient breathes through the mouthpiece (1), the breath-actuated mechanism is triggered moving the shroud (22) and aerosol vial downwards to fire the aerosol vial.

Figures 9a and 9b of the accompanying drawings illustrate an alternative cocking mechanism which may be incorporated into the protective casing of an inhaler device in accordance with the invention. The body portion (23) of the protective casing may comprise a separate upper portion (23) which envelops the end of the aerosol vial (5). Cocking spring (14) is positioned within the upper portion of the casing (23) so as not to apply the base of the aerosol vial (5). The upper portion (23) is retained on the body portion (24) of the protective casing by complementary flanges (22 and 24) which constitute a threaded arrangement such that rotation of the upper portion (23) in the direction of the arrow

X (Figure 9a) causes the upper portion (23) to move down the body portion (24) thereby compressing cocking spring (14) and applying the necessary cocking force to the breath-actuated mechanism.

Figures 10a and 10b illustrate an inhaler device in accordance with the invention which incorporates the features of Figures 8 and 9. The top of the protective casing comprises an upper portion (23) through which extends a shroud (22) whose length is selected to accommodate the particular size of aerosol vial (5). Cocking spring (25) extends between flange (24) on the shroud and a stop or top (26) of the upper portion (23) and is compressed by downward movement of the upper portion (23) upon rotation in the direction of the arrow X. When the patient breathes through the mouthpiece (not shown) the breath-actuated device is triggered and the shroud (22) moves downwardly under the influence of the spring (25) thereby firing the aerosol vial.

In a further embodiment of the invention (not illustrated in the drawings) the shroud (22) shown in Figures 8 and 10 may be dispensed with and replaced by a circumferential flange extending around the aerosol vial, equivalent to flange (24), against which cocking spring (25) will act. The circumferential flange may be fabricated as a snap-on component around the aerosol vial e.g. in the region of the neck of the vial. This arrangement will obviate the need for fabricating a series of struts to accommodate the different sizes of aerosol vial, since the aerosol vial will simply extend through the top of the protective casing.

Claims

1. An inhaler device comprising:
 - (i) a breath-actuated inhaler comprising a medication reservoir (accessed) within a housing which comprises a mouthpiece and breath-actuation means which prevents dispensing from the reservoir until a patient inhales through the mouthpiece, and;
 - (ii) a protective casing surrounding the breath-actuated inhaler, the casing comprising a body portion and a movable cover which may be displaced to allow a patient access to the mouthpiece to use the breath-actuated inhaler whilst it is within the casing, the breath-actuated inhaler being removable from the protective casing and operable outside the casing.
2. An inhaler device as claimed in Claim 1 in which the protective casing completely envelops the inhaler.
3. An inhaler device as claimed in Claim 1 or Claim 2 in which the inhaler comprises an aerosol

vial containing propellant and medicament and equipped with a dispensing valve.

4. An inhaler device as claimed in any preceding Claim in which the movable cover is mounted for movement about a pivot point positioned towards the top of the protective casing.

5. An inhaler device as claimed in any one of Claims 1 to 3 in which the movable cover is mounted for movement about a pivot point positioned towards the bottom of the protective casing.

6. An inhaler device as claimed in any preceding Claim in which the protective casing additionally comprises means for applying a cocking force to the breath-actuated inhaler.

7. An inhaler device as claimed in Claim 6 in which the means for applying the cocking force comprises a lever separate from the movable cover.

8. An inhaler device as claimed in Claim 6 in which the means for applying the cocking force comprises the movable cover.

9. An inhaler device as claimed in Claim 6 in which the means for applying the cocking force comprises an upper portion of the protective casing which is mounted on the remainder of the body portion by a screw thread arrangement, rotation of the upper portion causing movement thereof along the body portion.

10. An inhaler device as claimed in any preceding Claim in which the breath-actuated inhaler comprises means to switch the inhaler from the breath-actuated mode to a press-and-breathe mode.

11. An inhaler device as claimed in Claim 10 in which is constructed and arranged such that the inhaler is converted to and maintained in a breath-actuated inhaler upon insertion into the protective casing.

12. An inhaler device as claimed in any preceding Claim in which the breath-actuated inhaler additionally comprises means for providing an indication of the amount dispensed and/or remaining in the aerosol container.

13. An inhaler device as claimed in any preceding Claim in which the inhaler comprises an aerosol vial and the protective casing comprises a shroud surrounding the aerosol vial.

14. An inhaler device as claimed in Claim 13 in which the shroud is inserted within the remainder of the protective casing and spring biased to urge the aerosol vial towards a firing position.

15. A protective casing suitable for an inhaler device as claimed in any preceding Claim comprising a body portion and a movable cover.

Fig. 1.

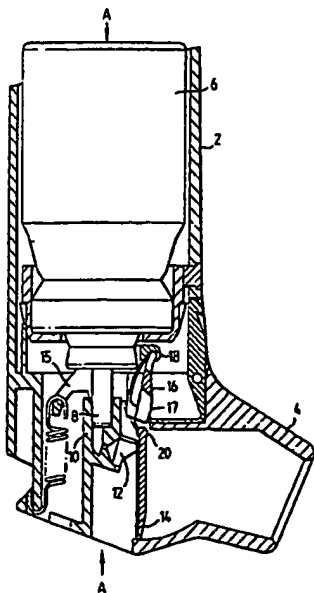


Fig. 2.

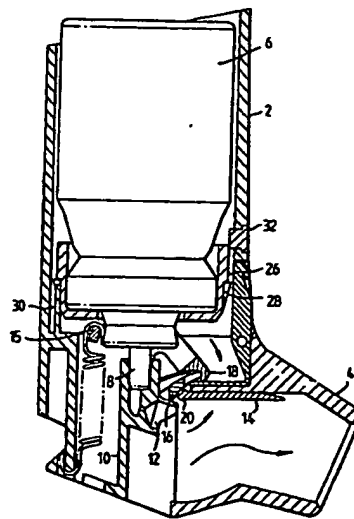
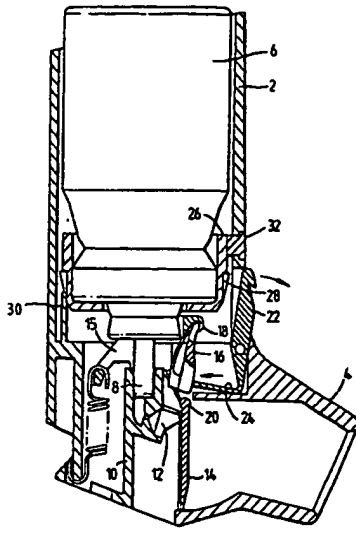
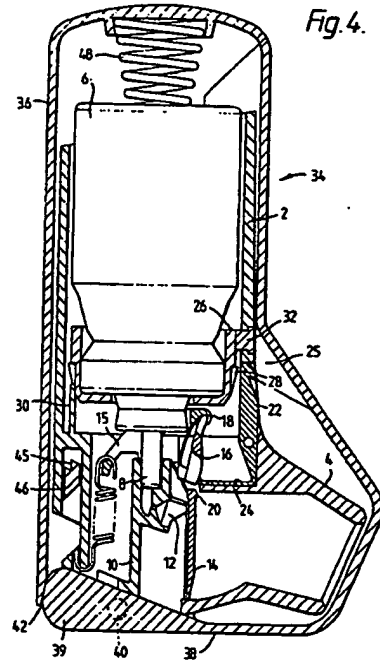


Fig. 3.



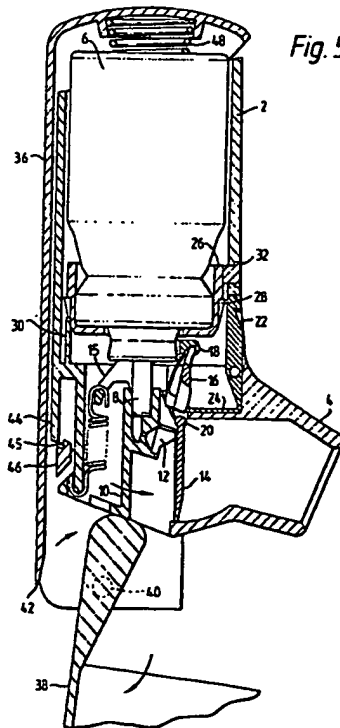
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Fig. 4.



10

Fig. 5.



11

Fig. 6a

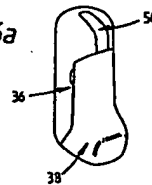
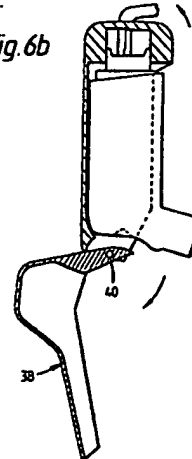
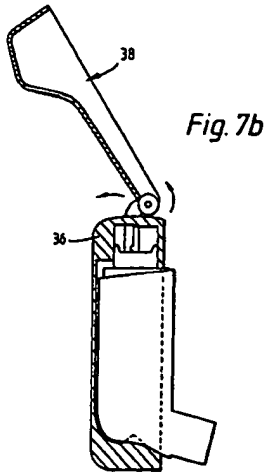
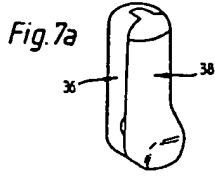


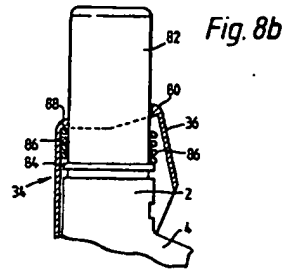
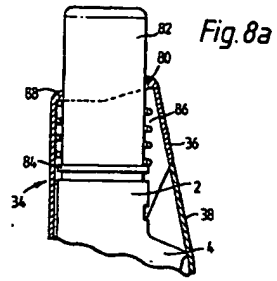
Fig. 6b



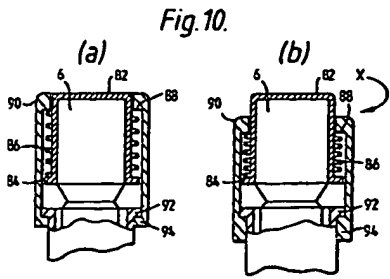
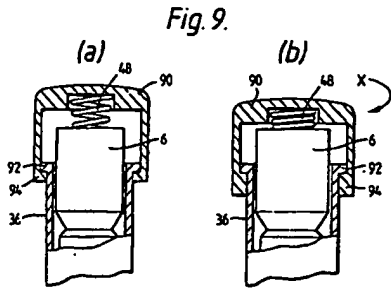
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13



14



15